

Young Australia's voting deficiency

EDITORIAL

By JAYDE ROBERTSON

STATISTICS from the Australian Electoral Commission revealed 25 per cent of young voters failed to enrol in the last federal election.

Many young adults were left wondering which politician was going to benefit them. Both parties portrayed themselves as "youth friendly", but one politician's enthusiasm definitely stood out.

Issues of concern to younger voters include marriage equality, employment, youth allowance, university funding and the National Broadband Network.

Tony Abbott gave his sentiments about marriage equality as "the fashion of the moment" to talkback radio host John Laws. His comments undoubtedly invoked the ire of younger listeners.

Prior to the election, Kevin Rudd announced that marriage equality legislation will be supported within 100 days of parliament if he were re-elected. This is a topic that many younger voters feel strongly about, so why was Labor's defeat so decisive? Clearly they are not enacting their democratic right to vote.

Rising unemployment rates are a dilemma, with Tony Abbott saying the number of jobs being cut is on the rise.

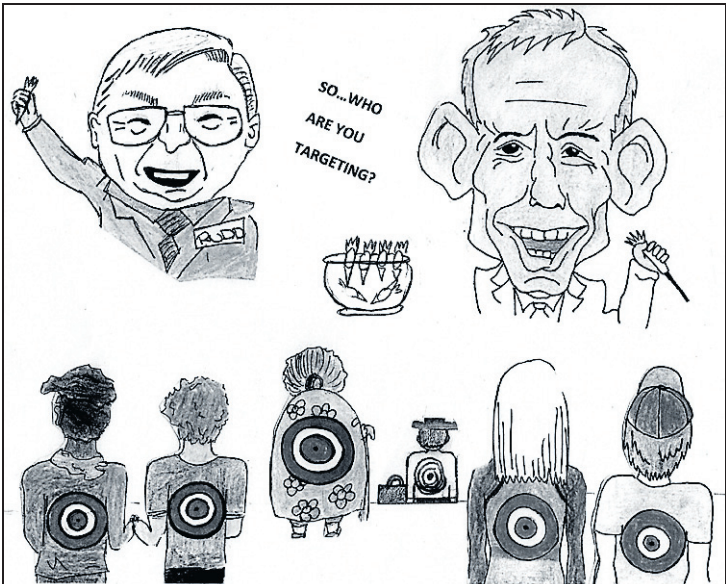
"While millions of people lost their jobs around the world, we have, until today, added nearly a million more than we had than when we went to office," Mr Rudd said during the leaders' debate on August 11.

The National Broadband Network is the biggest telecommunications reform in Australia's history. The Coalition's telecommunications policy focuses on fibre to the node-style broadband, which only requires rolling out fibre to neighbourhood cabinets and using Telstra's copper network for the rest of the distance to premises. In comparison, Labor's policy would see fibre installed all the way to premises, in a roll-out style which features greater speeds and faster network latency compared with the Coalition's plan. The younger generation comprehends this deficiency in communication speed, so why didn't they enrol to vote against the Coalition's archaic alternative?

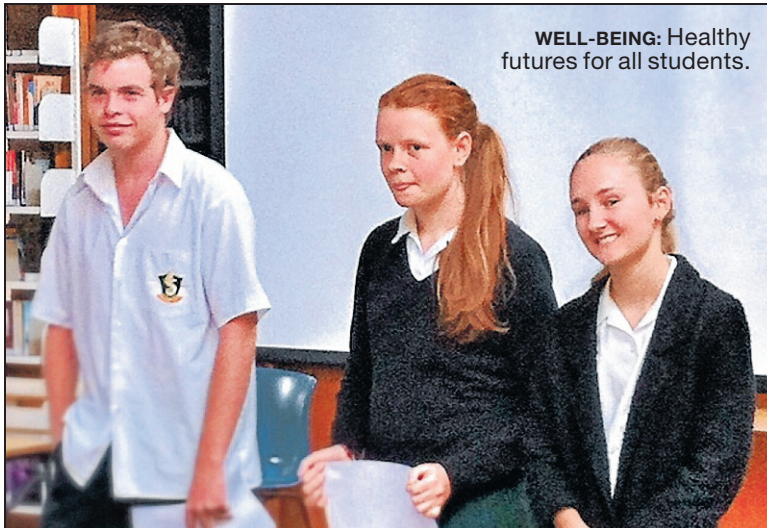
If more young people voted in their electorates and actively engaged in politics, Kevin Rudd would have had a sure fire shot of being re-elected.

Young people must engage with the political landscape and re-energise themselves in order to give them the best future they can.

Disinterest and neglect will not only hurt young people, but the shaping of this country for decades to come, leaving a legacy of democratic deficit.



Cartoon: Amara Woods and Amelia McLean



Future can be empowering

By MITCHELL DYET and SAMUEL BUYERS

IN 2013, Swansea High School participated in a Mind Matters initiative to empower students through educational programs.

The program, Healthy School Healthy Futures fundamentally embeds mental health and well-being into the school curriculum. It promotes equality in a school-based environment and targets all students regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or social demographic.

This program started with seven core students who conducted digital and tutorial-based activities on mental health and well-being.

Swansea High School is now the

recipient of a government-funded grant to help develop this program and start an annual cinema as a vital way to educate students on well-being and positive behaviour.

In May 2013, the Student Representative Council voted on various ideas that the school could implement into the curriculum to enhance school-based life for everyone.

Some of these ideas were guest speakers, performances on topical issues, anti-bullying workshops, resilience workshops and various activities for students aimed at building confidence and self-esteem.

"The Mind Matters program ... is helping to build a socially literate school environment," student leader Zac Graham said.

Night of opera gives voice when words fail

By SHAY PERRY

ON May 31 at the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music, students from four Hunter high schools (Swansea High, Lambton High, Warners Bay High, Toronto High) participated in the creative opera program Wot Opera.

Each school selected up to 20 students to work together in composing an opera comprising dramatic and musical expression.

Students were given 24 hours across four weeks to complete the writing, composition and painting of sets for the show date.

Each school presented their 20-minute opera at the Newcastle



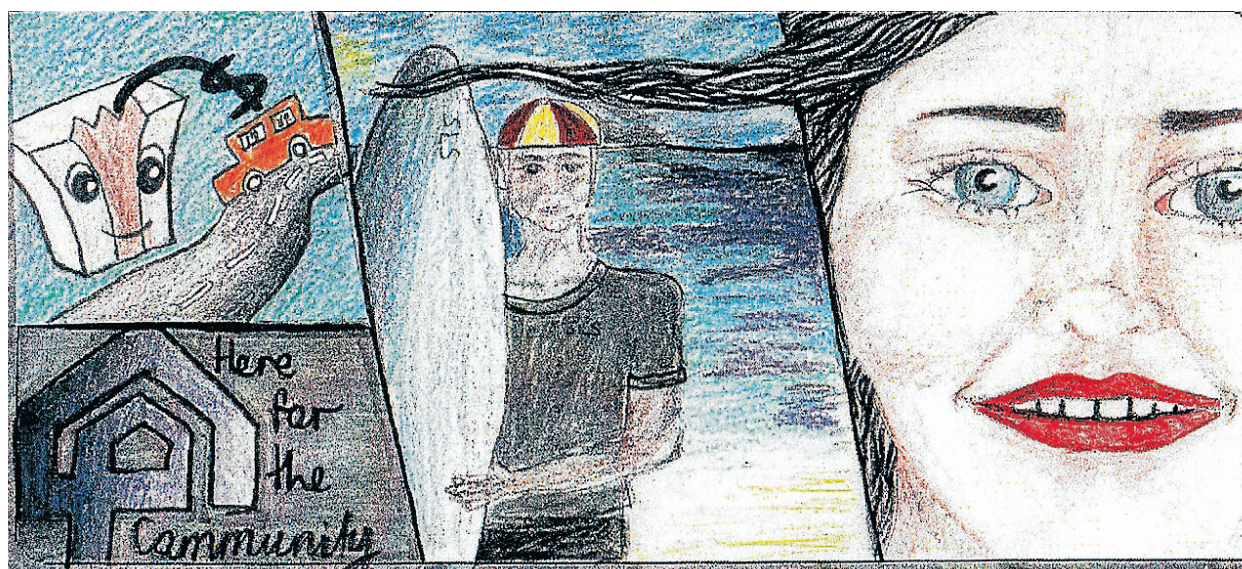
Conservatorium of Music in front of an audience of more than 300.

Swansea High School students worked with three representatives from Wot Opera: Stephanie Acraman, Nate Gilkes and Katie McKee to make their ideas show-ready.

"The students were a joy to work with, imaginative and thoughtful and eager to share their ideas with us," said Nate Gilkes.

Swansea's performance was based on young people coping with conformity and mental illness.

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